

THE DRAMA

Modern Shakespeare
The Gloomy View Taken by
Eminent Critics.

It has become a fashion of late to asperse modern theatergoers as being disinclined to attend the performance of Shakespearean plays, and unfit to understand them. The most pronounced reflections of this kind come from the pen of the venerable William Winter, whose knowledge of Shakespeare and long association with the stage give special weight to his thunderings. But Mr. Winter is not alone. Anyone who reads many newspapers published in many cities will recall such phrases as "assuming that the public of today cares for Shakespeare—which it doesn't—or could understand his works—which it can't." The American of today is in this regard found guilty. To the modern theater Shakespeare is dead. O Tempora! O Mores!

Readers of The Times will do well, however, if they join in this lament with caution. They dwell in the present. They are largely responsible for the conditions which dominate the theater. The whole aim of the theatrical manager is to conform his offerings with their demands. If, then, Shakespeare finds no patrons when his plays are enacted on the stage, it is a sad reflection, not on the managers, but on those who occupy theater seats. It will be decidedly better to follow Mr. Winter and his co-mourners slowly.

Washington has just enjoyed a remarkable performance of "Hamlet." It is true the protagonist of the tragedy was presented in a new and rather unfavorable light. But it is equally true that few embodiments of this role have affected audiences more plainly, and few investitures of this play have been so generous and accurate. In March the city will view the most elaborate production of "Julius Caesar" ever given in America, possibly the most elaborate ever given on any stage. Stuart Robson has already appeared locally in "The Comedy of Errors." Later in the season the local theater will present Creston Clarke in several Shakespearean plays: Ward and James in a fine performance of "The Tempest," and Charles B. Hanford in an exceptional production of "Much Ado About Nothing," unless, as seems now likely to be the case, exceptionally large receipts in the cities of the South and West should keep the two latter companies away from the East all season long. It is possible several special presentations will mark the close of spring, such as the performance of "Romeo and Juliet," several seasons ago, in which Miss Adams, Miss Robson, Mr. Hackett, Mr. Faversham and others appeared—to the special credit of Mr. Hackett.

This program must impress even the faded theatergoer as attractive. Those who saw Mr. Mansfield's wonderful production of "Henry V" and revelled in its wealth of color, its inspiring stage pictures, its complete equipment and generally even performance will not need be driven to see his "Julius Caesar." Every newspaper in the United States has referred to this production in New York. Every reader of theatrical comment knows that it has been warmly approved by every critic excepting alone those who depend on cheap abuse, insane smartness, or insensate chatter for their reputations. The Southern "Hamlet" was a delight to the eye. Creston Clarke shines in intellect for his restricted material equipment. Frederick Ward and Louis James are sterling actors, and their "Julius Caesar," while it did not rival the Mansfield production now current, was entirely adequate, and will long be a pleasant memory to those who viewed it at the National Theater in the first week of its history. Mr. Hanford is an admirable actor, studious, intelligent, conscientious, capable, and abundantly endowed by nature. Mr. Robson is entirely acceptable as one of the two Dromios. Shakespeare in such hands is assured an interpretation which compares favorably with that of any earlier age.

Manifestly these six ventures must be profitable. Otherwise not even Mr. Mansfield could find a manager. If they are profitable it is because they are patronized by persons who pay for their seats. This is sufficiently notable to silence Mr. Winter. But it is only half the story. Through the same territory companies which present such characteristically modern works as "Tom Sawyer," "D'Arcy of the Guards," "The Runaway Girl," "The Show Girl," and various Hoyt farces have failed one after the other. Their plaint is that "the bookings are too numerous," that "the communities are exhausted," that "the people don't know a good thing when they see it." Yet "The Tempest," "Much Ado About Nothing," "Julius Caesar," and "Hamlet" do not suffer.

Mr. Mansfield, Mr. Sothern, Mr. Clarke, Mr. Hanford, Mr. Ward, Mr. James, and Mr. Robson are all to continue in Shakespearean roles next year. Furthermore, a significant addition is to be made to their number. Mr. Gillette, Miss Rehan, Mrs. Fiske, Miss Marlowe and Mrs. Campbell are also to enact Shakespearean roles either next season or next season but one. It is said further that when opportunity offers Blanche Bates, James K. Hackett, Henry Miller, Nat Goodwin and half a dozen others are to rise out of the slough of dramatized novels to the plane of Shakespeare. Mr. Gillette is to rival Mr. Sothern in "Hamlet."

Mr. Hackett's plans are embryonic. Mrs. Fiske is to play in "Macbeth" and "Much Ado About Nothing." Miss Marlowe and Miss Rehan will doubtless revive their old embodiments of Viola in "Twelfth Night." Beatrice in "Much Ado," Ros-



TRIXIE FRIGANZA IN "THE CHAPERONS."

ANNIE RUSSELL IN "MICE AND MEN."

lind in "As You Like It," and Hermina in "Midsummer Night's Dream." Mrs. Campbell is an unknown. Nat Goodwin once played Shylock with some success. Miss Bates would shine in any of the classic comedies. Mr. Miller is not less adaptable than many of his predecessors, who are now regarded as standard actors. Macready for example. The theatrical prospect includes also tours through America of Sir Henry Irving in at least two Shakespearean impersonations. Mr. Forbes Robertson in repertoire, and Mr. Herbert Berthom Tree in "King John" and "Othello."

Present and future, then, the theatrical outlook for Shakespeare is not dismal. It may be doubted that any earlier period in the history of the stage presented a higher average of excellence than that of the group indicated. His triline art, like that of writing, painting, sculpturing, and building houses, has advanced greatly in the past two centuries. Everyone is prone to think every age great by its own; and, with all deference, this is the mistake made by Mr. Winter and his associate grumblers. A few periods may have been more brilliant, but none has presented so high a general average. Indeed, the likelihood is that Garrick, Siddons, Kemble, and the whole constellation of which everyone now speaks with such reverence would fall before comparison with the lights of our much berated and anathematized modern stage. This is true of all the other arts, excepting possibly architecture, and it is true of acting. So, if Shakespeare is presented at all these days, his plays are given an investiture and interpretation which ranks at least as high as the productions of any earlier age.

The truth of the matter is that Shakespeare is now, as he always has been since the year 1616, the highest ambition of every worthy actor. Occasionally men rise to prominence in farce, in pantomime, and in various kinds of restricted comedy who are afraid to venture into this larger field; but the general rule is still true—every worthy actor mounts on other plays only to enact those of Shakespeare. As long as this is the case, and as long as the Bard of Avon still stands supreme in the curricula of every educational institution, there need be no fear either for the production of his plays or for their full endorsement by theatrical audiences. Theatergoers and actors alike hold Shakespeare in the highest reverence, and in their hands even the theatrical syndicate is like modeler's clay.

A. D. A.

Past and Future.

Mr. Sothern's engagement, unfortunately marred by his illness, proved to be one of the most important events of the theatrical season. His performances of Hamlet were viewed by very large audiences, and consistently indorsed by audible handclapping and inaudible grief when the noble Prince of Denmark passed from the stage. The first production of "If I Were King" drew one of the largest audiences the National has known this year, only to see that audience disperse when announcement was made of Mr. Sothern's illness. His understudy—Sydney C. Mather, a Washingtonian—delighted his fellow-townsmen by giving a performance of Mr. Sothern's role which was at once like that of the principal and imbued with the actor's own spirit.

Mr. Mather is not Mr. Sothern's equal (if he were, of what advantage would Mr. Sothern find his extended and varied experience?) but he has proven himself an actor of much promise. "The Two Schools" proved anew that the play is after all the thing. It was in the hands of a notably efficient company. The accom-

panions of that company infused life into lines as dead as old Marley. But the subject-matter was so questionable and the play so weak that its management could not hope to rival the Sothern engagement. The program of polite vaudeville at Chase's reaped its seasonable profit. The Lafayette enjoyed the distinction of presenting as good a rural drama as is often shown at the highest prices. The Academy revelled in thrills and sensations. And the Empire and Lyceum did a land-office business after Christmas Eve.

The New Year week's offerings are multiform. Annie Russell will inaugurate her new play here, and will, of course, fill the National, whether her "medium" be good or bad. "Sky Farm" now depends largely on the reputation of its author, whose "Poor Relation" and "Peaceful Valley" are endeared to so many hearts. If this latest work compares well with its predecessors, the Columbia will assemble splendid audiences, no matter what counter-attractions are offered. Chase's offers a very attractive novelty in the form of two experts in Burmese football. "The Chaperons" at popular prices ought to crowd the Lafayette, unless the unexpected has happened, and the community has awakened from its thralldom to "musical comedy." The Academy and other theaters present characteristic bills.

Annie Russell in "Mice and Men."

Again has Mr. Frohman selected Washington for a first production. Tomorrow evening at the New National Theater he will present Annie Russell in the first American production of Madeline Lucette Ryley's new play, "Mice and Men." He is in the city to give the final rehearsals his personal attention, and will remain over until the opening of the new play. It has always been Mr. Frohman's custom to present Miss Russell in wholesome and pretty plays, and in London, where "Mice and Men" has been running for a year, it was pronounced the most engaging of this class of comedies. Mrs. Ryley has written many attractive plays, and this, her latest work, is said to be one of her best, and to bring Miss Russell a play splendidly suited to her genial art and charming personality. The part of Catherine, which she will create, will form a most proper companion to "Catherine," "Miss Hobbs," the princess in "A Royal Family," and her latest creation in "The Girl and the Judge." Mr. Frohman has provided beautiful scenery, and the quaint costumes, appropriate to the period of 1786, the time of the action. The title of this new work is manifestly suggested by the lines from Burns—

"The best laid schemes o' mice and men gang aft a-kyle." Mark Embury is a middle-aged bachelor, with peculiar notions and theories. He tires of his lonesome life, and decides to have a wife, but to his mind there are no women suitable. So he decides to select a young miss and train her. He inspects the inhabitants of the founding asylum, and chooses "Little Britain," otherwise Peggy, who is taken into his house in order to be educated for the position she is—as he supposes—to fill.

Embury has a nephew, Capt. George Lovell, who, as a matter of fact, has been carrying on a very pronounced flirtation with Mrs. Joanna Goodlake, wife of Roger Goodlake, an old friend of Embury, but Lovell is much attracted by the simple fascinations of Peggy, and Peggy promptly falls in love with him. Peggy has no idea of her guardian's purpose, but (in the second act), when she has been his ward for a couple of years, he finds that his sentiments have strengthened, and in a great measure altered. He had intended to marry Peggy in order to obtain a

companion, and perhaps in due time a nurse. He now wants to marry her because she has found her way to his heart. In the end, the self-sacrificing old bachelor, keenly as he feels the shattering of his great scheme, and the loss of the woman he loves, stands aside and gives her to Lovell.

The supporting company in this play is the strongest Mr. Frohman has given Miss Russell in the five years she has starred under his management. It includes Orrin Johnson, who continues as her leading man, and plays the part of Captain Lovell; John Mason, who was especially engaged for this production to create the part of Embury; John Glendinning, Charles Butler, E. A. Eberle, Frank Goldsmith, T. C. Valentine, Mrs. Glendinning, May Galyer, and Mrs. G. H. Gilbert, who will have one of those roles best suited to her delightful work. There will be two matinees during the engagement in Washington—New Year Day, and Saturday.

"The Chaperons" at the Lafayette.

The new year at the Lafayette Opera House will be begun by the presentation of "The Chaperons," which was heard in Washington last season at another theater, and at much higher prices. The engagement will begin tomorrow night, and there will be matinees on Wednesday, Thursday (New Year Day) and Saturday. "The Chaperons" of this season is said to be the largest and most expensive organization playing at what are known as popular prices. The company numbers over sixty people, and the cast, without hardly an exception, is the same as that which appeared in the travesty during its two months' run on Broadway last summer, when the prices were \$2 a seat. Manager Frank L. Perley, who directs the fortunes of "The Chaperons," and who is celebrated as the former manager of "The Bostonians," the Alice Nielsen Opera Company, and other great operative organizations, has made an effort in the present case to keep in touch with the demand of the times and to furnish a maximum of entertainment for a minimum price. These, he considers, are the days of "bargains," and if all is true that is claimed for this season's presentation of "The Chaperons" it is the most alluring offering on the amusement bargain counter.

The cast of the play is headed, as it was last year, by Walter Jones, Edd Redway, Eva Tanguay, and Trixie Friganza. Mr. Jones, who is celebrated as the funny "tramp" of "1902," still appears as the humorous old Irishman who, having taken a contract to build the New York subway from the Battery to the Dewey Arch, becomes bankrupt because somebody moved the arch. Edd Redway is the same curious German billposter, who has turned detective and



"SKY FARM" AT THE COLUMBIA.

comer is Miss Genevieve Day, who is now playing the role of Violet Smilax, the pupil in the conservatory of chaperons whose love story forms the basis of what little plot belongs to the travesty. All the popular musical hits of last year are retained, and many new numbers have been added since last year; among them a new solo and chorus for Miss Friganza, entitled "The Modern Chaperon," a duet for the tenor and baritone, "Love in a Palace," and a musical oddity which has been assigned to Miss Tanguay and with which she is said to have made a great hit, called "There Ain't No Use of Talking, Billie's Very Good to Me."

Vaudeville at Chase's.

New Year week will be noted at Chase's by the presentation of eight distinguished polite vaudeville novelties, which are expected to eclipse in popular estimation the program of last week. One number alone of the forthcoming bill serves to distinguish it. This is an Oriental novelty, presenting Mung Toon and Mung Chet, the Burmese football players, who have attained extraordinary skill in a strange game which has unsurmountable difficulties for any but those who have devoted their lives to it. A framework for this rare attraction will be provided by Bert Howard and Leona Bland, Gillette's musical dogs, the famous Roscoe Midgits, Frank Gardiner and Lotie Vincent, Little Charlie Rossow, Rae and Brosche, and another series of interesting motion pictures showing the scenes in the nursery tale of "Little Red Riding Hood." Many strange and almost incomprehensible things, particularly in the amusement line, come out of the Orient from time to time, and over here excite unbounded wonder and admiration, but probably the most remarkable of all is the game of "chipline," as played this week at Chase's by Mung Toon and Mung Chet, Burmah's most expert ball-players and jugglers. In the first place the use of the hands and arms is barred, and catching and putting of the wicker balls has to be done with other parts of the body. This exemption of the hands has naturally occasioned a wonderful pedal dexterity, the feet of these two Burmese possessing pretty nearly the powers of the hands. A sub-

Extravaganza at the Lyceum.

The attraction for the coming week at the Lyceum Theater will be Rice & Barton's "Big Gaiety Spectacular Extravaganza," augmented by a sprinkling of vaudeville features. Rice & Barton, both well known to theatergoers, participate in every performance. The curtain raiser is a musical burlesque in three scenes, entitled "Brown Among the Daisies." Following this is the olio, in which will appear Miss Idylla Vyner, J. Quigley, the versatile humorist; the Bell Trio, Eckhoff and Gordon, musical laugh-makers; Escher Sisters, buck dancers; Olla Hood and company, singers; Mitchell and Marion, minstrel boys. After the olio Rice and Barton present "Raiding the Tenderloin," the entire company appearing. A chorus of girls and corps de ballet, which will include those novel dancers, Zinta, Little Africa, and Mile. Maza, are introduced.

"The Octoroons" at the Empire.

Smart and Williams' "Octoroons" will be Manager Schlesinger's New Year week offering at the Empire Theater. The company is this season headed by Smart and Williams, who have been surrounded by a number of other well-known performers and a chorus of thirty voices. A new musical comedy, "The Pullman Porters," a piece said to be good, replete with comedy and any number of catchy musical numbers, and equipped with some pretty scenery and costumes, presents Irving Jones, the song writer; the Rees Brothers, recently with Williams and Walker; Evans Sisters, and Mamie Emerson as leading members of the support. Joe Walcott, the welterweight champion pugilist, is also of the company, in the way of an added feature. "The Octoroons" of this year are said to be as strong vocally as any company of colored performers ever organized. On New Year Eve, as a sort of an extra feature, a prize cakewalk will be given by the company and a number of local walkers, and it is said that on the same evening two members of the company will be wedded on the stage immediately after the performance, to which ceremony the public will be invited.

How I Became an Actress.

By ANNIE RUSSELL.

None of my family ever had anything to do with the stage. I never entered my head as a girl that I could ever be an actress. I am quite sure that if I had given expression to such a thought I would have been rebuked by my mother who at that time had the almost universal prejudice against the theater as did the country people of her generation. Indeed, it would have been an absolute matter of surprise, and she really might have fainted, if anyone had told her that not only her two prim little daughters, but also Baby Tommie—afterward one of the best known of the Little Lord Fauntleroy—would in after years be stage folk.

Really my first ambition was to be an author. Quite well do I remember my first short story, how carefully I penned it and with what great hopes I sent it away to the publisher of a magazine. But a cruel editor returned my first manuscript and with that little slip of paper which stated "we cannot use" it came the deathblow to my literary aspirations.

My first professional appearance was made at the tender age of ten. Miss Rose Etyngie was coming to Montreal to play "Miss Merton." As she carried only one child to play the boy she wrote to the manager of the Opera House requesting him to engage a girl for the part of Jeanne and to have her perfect by the time of the star's arrival. In response to the manager's advertisement my

mother took me to the theater and I was given the part. Miss Etyngie arrived and I was summoned for my first rehearsal. Hardly had Miss Etyngie seen me when she exclaimed: "What's this?" "The child you asked me to get," replied the manager. To which Miss Etyngie remarked, "I said a girl, not a child. I want a young woman who can play the part. Get me somebody if you have to scour the town."

My poor faint little heart was quite overcome by this and I retired to the wings and set up a dismal howling. My vigorous outburst of grief attracted Miss Etyngie's attention and she called me to her and let me go through the lines of the part I had learned. After my first appearance Miss Etyngie engaged me for her company and at the close of the season advised me to go to New York. The advice was taken, and I was given a place in the chorus of Haverley's "Pinafore" company. Afterward I sang the part of Josephine and remained with Mr. Haverley's organization for two years. After this engagement I appeared on tour in the West Indies, playing everything from young girl to old woman. Here I gained a wonderful experience. Then followed my first real important engagement. This was as Esmeralda.

At this time I was sixteen years old, my dresses were not very long, and I wore my hair down my back. When I went to see the stage manager about the part he looked at me and decided in his wisdom that I was too youthful. We only exchanged a few words and as I felt sure that among the multitude of applicants he would not remember me, I determined to play a little trick. So I went home, put on a long dress, did my hair up, and assuming what I believed to be a more matured expression, I called again. He fell into the snare and I got the part.

Announcements, Formal and Informal

Mr. Sothern will dedicate at the Lyceum Theater, New York, next October, "The Proud Prince," by Justin Huntley McCarthy, a miracle play of the eleventh century. A Biblical drama in verse, based on the story of David and Goliath, is now being written for him by Mr. Gale Young Rice, of Louisville, and a comedy with Chatterton as its central figure is in course of construction by Mr. Ernest Lacy, of Philadelphia. Besides these Mr. Sothern will revive at least one Shakespearean play each year. In the coming summer he will appear in San Francisco in "Romeo and Juliet" with Cecilia Loftus as Juliet. The year following he will revive "Much Ado About Nothing."

Mary Johnston's "Audrey" in Washington.

Mary Johnston's "Audrey" made into dramatic form by Harriet Ford and E. F. Boddington, will be presented at the Columbia Theater during the week of February 9. From all accounts it seems Miss Johnston's great story has lent itself readily to the requirements of the stage. In any event Harriet Ford and E. F. Boddington appear to have produced a drama of much human interest and dramatic power. Liebler & Co., who never do anything by halves, have brought together a company of the very first quality. Miss Eleanor Robson, one of the most charming actresses on the stage today, impersonates the title role. When "Audrey" was presented at the Madison Square Theater, New York, Miss Robson for the sixth time within two years enjoyed a marked personal triumph, the others being "In a Balcony," with Robert Browning's "In a Balcony," with Mrs. LeMoine and Otis Skinner; in "Unleavened Bread," in "A Gentleman of France," and as Juliet. Other players in the company are Forrest Robinson, Ada Dwyer, Frederic Perry, Selene Johnson, George Woodward, James O'Neill, Jr., Anne Caverly, and Frank Lamb.

Mme. Mantelli Coming to Chase's.

Mme. Eugenia Mantelli, one of the leading singers of the great Metropolitan Opera Company, surrounded by polite vaudeville luminaries worthy to shine in the same bill with the distinguished songstress, will appear at Chase's next week, beginning January 5. The other features of the program are Valeria Bergere, the eminent actress, and her own company, the Quilley brothers, Les Delbosco, the great Stuber, Stuart Barnes, the Four Huntings, and the new motion pictures, presenting "Scrooge, or Marley's Ghost," scenes from Dickens' famous novel.

The engagement of Mme. Eugenia Mantelli for a brief polite vaudeville season is an important and triumphant stroke of policy by the Vaudeville Managers' Association, of which Mr. Chase is president. She is the greatest artist so far obtained for this circuit, but her success in her new field has far exceeded expectations. She is now at the zenith of her powers and personal charms. Valeria Bergere in any other bill would be important enough to be the central attraction. She created the title role in Belasco's "Madame Butterfly," the dainty Japanese one-act play that was the forerunner of "The Darling of the Gods." Miss Bergere will present here "Billie's First Love," a sketch of New York and Paris stage life written by Grace Griswold.

Hagenbeck Follows "The Chaperons."

Arrangements were completed yesterday for the appearance of the Carl Hagenbeck Trained Animal Company of Hamburg, Germany, at the Lafayette Opera House after "The Chaperons." The show comes intact from a long tour of the Continent, and was first exhibited in this country for ten weeks at the New York Theater, New York City. It is in many respects similar to the wild animal congress seen on the midway at the Chicago World's Fair, and afterwards taken to the larger cities of the country. Carl Hagenbeck has given his personal attention to the formation of this show as well. His most daring trainers appear in the ring and use upward of one hundred and fifty animals in the various acts. The show uses three large baggage cars and carries an immense amount of paraphernalia.